

Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire

One of the key organisations on the rural scene is "Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire" (RCAN).

Formerly known as Nottinghamshire Rural Community Council, this is the primary rural development specialist organisation working across Nottinghamshire. RCAN provides specialist rural knowledge and intelligence to influence and advocate on behalf of Nottinghamshire's rural communities. With over 80 years of experience, RCAN is well equipped to inform current and future service provision, stimulate community action, solve problems and raise the rural agenda. For a number of years the diocese has been represented on the Executive Committee. As Bishop's Adviser on Rural Affairs, Derek Hollis currently holds office as a Trustee in the organisation.

A major event in the diary for rural folk in Nottinghamshire is the annual County Show on the Showground at Winthorpe near Newark. Derek was appointed a couple of years ago as Honorary Chaplain to the Newark and Nottinghamshire Agricultural Society and attends the shows on both days.

Derek's work also brings him into contact with a number of other



organisations working within the countryside, such as Nottinghamshire Association of Villages and Community Halls, Notts. News and the National Association of Local Councils, as well as farming help charities Farm Crisis Network and the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution.

Derek can be contacted at email: rural.adviser@southwell.anglican.org

Links to the above mentioned external organisations can be found on his webpage under the Department for Development section of the diocesan website.

The Rainbow Project

The Rainbow Project is being re-branded it now has a new logo and a new member of staff. Susannah Estella started work on 1st September 2008. Susannah is skilled and experienced in the area of teaching. A large proportion of her work will involve the recruitment and training of volunteers. The main areas of work will be offering casework support to people seeking asylum and refuge. It is a pleasure to welcome Susannah on board.

We celebrated Racial Justice Sunday on 14th September 2008, the service was held at Southwell Minster as part of the events being held to commemorate its 900 years. The afternoon consisted of workshops followed by refreshments and finished with a lively meaningful service. Several members of Clergy from the majority black led churches attended as well as quite a number of residents from within the area of Nottingham, it truly reflected the aims of hoping to reach out to provide an inclusive event.

Next Year's Racial Justice Sunday Service will be held at St Mary's Church, Nottingham on 13th September 2009.

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Supporting Churches, Serving Communities

I hope this will be the first of many editions of Partnership Update which will become a conduit of news, information and possibilities about mission in the context of partnerships across the diocese. We need to celebrate the social action initiatives across our parishes. In this diocese we are very active in the parishes serving our communities in a wide variety of ways. Sometimes we work with other churches or voluntary organisations, occasionally with the local authority. We need to affirm what we are doing and look for new opportunities for working with others for the common good. Statistics in the report, "Moral, But No Compass" from the Von Hügel Institute, referring to our diocese, included:

- an excess of 1200 volunteers organised work with 0-10 year olds.
- 85 different churches offered support to toddlers and their carers, with 2,550 people attending these groups each month.
- In 80 churches clubs were organised for more than 1300 elderly people each month.
- 78 church based youth clubs were active with 1037 young people attending each month.
- Practical help schemes, of some form, for the housebound, happened in 103 churches.
- 26 churches worked with the homeless and 13 offered support to refugees and asylum seekers.
- Almost 50 churches provided support and counselling for ex-offenders and for those with problems with drug and alcohol use.



There is much to celebrate and even more potential. In the Dept of Development we are already working on identifying ways in which we can support this community focused activity. We need to share good practice, we need to offer more support for new initiatives and projects, we need to be more confident bidding for funds and approaching potential partners. I hope this Update will give you some idea of the range of activity going on at the moment. Please feel free to contact us with ideas, stories and reflections on partnership working in the diocese.

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Associate Director: Partnerships**

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The Environment

Shelagh Baird-Smith the diocesan World Development Adviser writes:

In my capacity as Diocesan Environment Office, I have been involved in the development of the local Agenda 21 Climate change Partnership. Launched in April 1999, the Forum is a partnership of voluntary, private and public sector organisations working to create a better quality of life for all in the county. Working as part of the Interim Steering Group, I have been involved in producing Terms of Reference for the group and Local Area Agreement delivery plans around National Indicator 186: 'reduce per capita CO2 emissions', as well as adaptation to climate change and tackling fuel poverty.

Nottinghamshire Agenda 21 publishes Living for Tomorrow - a successful local sustainability magazine for Nottinghamshire. It's about the many people in our communities who aren't just talking about putting the world to rights but are actually getting on and doing it in many different ways. <http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/home/environment/greenissues/livingfortomorrow.htm>

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Nottingham Inter Faith Council (NIFC)

Richard Hawthorne currently Hon Sec to NIFC Management Committee has agreed to become our diocesan representative on the committee. He will liaise regularly with David McCoulough, Associate Director: Partnerships. Richard is a retired businessman, worships at St Nic's, is involved with many community based projects and has been involved with NIFC for a number of years. Interfaith Council website details: www.interfaithnottm.org

items for future Update

- Tourism and Mission
- The Third Sector: what is it?
- Partnerships in education

see inside

- Nottingham Seed Group L'Arche
- Who is my neighbour?
- Partners for the Common Good

Nottingham Seed Group Praying and working to establish a L'Arche community

What is L'Arche?

L'Arche is an international family of 130 communities in 30 countries in which people with a learning disability and assistants live together. It was founded more than 40 years ago by Jean Vanier and although it is based on Christian principles it welcomes people of all faiths and none. L'Arche UK has 9 communities.

L'Arche believes that everyone is of unique and sacred value and everyone has the same dignity and the same rights. Friendship is at the heart of L'Arche where everybody is encouraged to play as full a part as possible in the community life.

Why A L'Arche community in Nottingham?

A L'Arche community is a sign, a sign to all the churches as to how the church could be, totally ecumenical, for our friends with learning disability see no differences, just the love of Jesus for all.

A L'Arche community is a sign, a sign to our society obsessed with success, power, beauty, materialism, for our friends with learning disability at the heart of the community teach us about friendship, space, time, vulnerability, about being 'real' and about what is really important in life.

The vision for Nottingham

A group first began to work for L'Arche back in the '80's so the vision has been around for a while! 4 years ago 5 people started to pray together. Others heard and joined the group. The group



is made up of people from different church traditions and come from all over Nottingham. L'Arche UK encouraged us to continue exploring and 18 months ago we became a seed group which means not just prayer but work in doing a big feasibility study and all the ground work in establishing a community.

Where are we now?

The Bishop of Sherwood, The Rt Revd Tony Porter, has agreed to be a patron for this exciting project. It is hoped to hold an update meeting in January. Details when available from David McCoulough and Marian Crawford.

For more information contact Marian Crawford 0115 974 6883 email: marian.crawford@ntlworld.com

Joining Together in the Mission of God in Lambley

As part of a Deanery Mission we called together representatives of the Parish Councils, Leaders of Community Groups in the three rural parishes in Gedling Deanery and talked about the needs of those communities.

For Lambley one of the things that emerged was the isolation of elderly people in a community which the Borough Strategic Plan identified as having poor access to resources. The PCC decided to seek support for setting up a lunch club.

Representatives went to the Parish Council to share their ideas. The result was the offer of the Village Hall at a reduced rate as the venue and the services of the School (not a church school) kitchen to provide the meals. Potential volunteers were sought via the Parish Magazine and a trial lunch set up with these volunteers to which the head teacher, parish council, and local authority social and development workers were invited along with some of the elderly residents.

Gedling Council for Voluntary Service provided a grant for start up costs and a coordinator was identified from the volunteers. We have moved from once a month to once a fortnight and have an average of 15 attending each time. The church provides the coordinator and the PCC is the organising body for legal, financial and insurance purposes, but both clientele and volunteers are composed of church and non church members. The school from time to time provides some entertainment.

This is a relatively simple example of partnership with Parish Council, PCC, School, and CVS, which contributes to the health and welfare of the community.

It began from a simple invitation to have a conversation about the needs of the community with interested parties.

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Who is my neighbour?

We are all aware of how richly diverse our society is nowadays. Part of that diversity is expressed through the various faith traditions that we adhere to.

Whilst many of us wish to live in harmony with those different from ourselves, there is often a great lack of understanding between the different faith communities. Sometimes such lack of understanding becomes suspicion, fear and even hatred. We all long to live in a safer, more tolerant and compassionate society. This desire is often referred to as community or social cohesion.

Increasingly government is recognising the vital role that faith communities already play in building community cohesion and how we have to be accepted as partners in working to improve things.

A recent publication from the Dept of Communities and Local Government offers churches and other faith groups

an opportunity and a framework to get more involved. I would like to draw attention to: **Face to Face and Side by Side: A framework for partnership in our multi faith society**

Over the past few months some of the team in the Dept for Development based at Dunham House have been working on creating opportunities for churches locally to engage with local government, the voluntary sector and other faith groups on this very agenda.

Hazel Blears, Secretary for Communities and Local Government, endorses the new framework which we are already talking to other agencies about, including The City Council, The County Council, One Nottingham, and Nottingham Inter Faith Council. The Minister writes "This framework sets out how, over the next three years, we will support a stronger dialogue between people of different faiths and beliefs in every community and encourage the kind of inter faith cooperation that can make pleasant

and harmonious neighbourhoods for all." **Face to Face and Side by Side** aims to create more local opportunities both for face to face dialogue which supports a greater understanding of shared values as well as an appreciation of distinctiveness; and for side by side collaborative social action where people come together and share their time, energy and skills to improve their local neighbourhood.

Who is my neighbour? What do they believe? What are our shared values? How can we work in partnership for the benefit of our neighbourhoods? Hopefully this new framework will breathe life into faith communities, local government, strategic partnerships and individuals to work together for the welfare of all.

If this an area of mission that interests you and you want further information, advice or training do please contact us in the Dept for Development 01636 817232.

Partners For the Common Good

Our Hidden Strength

Parishes around our Diocese bring to their communities an array of social action - from toddlers groups, to lunch clubs, work with the homeless and beyond. We are at a point where we must recognise just how much goes on and what makes this service such a strength of our church. We are rich in resources and people and we have a unique structure that helps to make this work possible.

This may not have struck many members of the Church as remarkable but looked at from the outside it clearly allows contacts and partnerships to develop in a way that fosters effective social action. Central to the life of the Diocese are the parishes, and it is here where most of the action in the Church of England happens. This central focus together with the network of separate units makes for added value. It enables churchpeople to support, collaborate and encourage each other.

The drive to modernisation

Local government has changed and continues to change. Instead of being a service provider it is now more responsive to the life of its citizens. This process of modernisation is aimed at making our Nottingham City Council, Nottinghamshire County Council and the District Councils more accountable

and democratic. The modern local authority is geared to listen and to be responsive in the way it delivers vital services. The nuts and bolts of democracy are being renewed so that decision making can be brought as close as possible to the citizens. The policies, strategies and decisions made by local government are all open and available for inspection and comment.

The local Church

Of course the church, and particularly the Church of England, has always been involved in civic life. What we are offered through this process of modernisation is the challenge to accept and understand the changes that are taking place in the way our common life is ordered. And then to step forward and become involved in the renewed democratic structures so that the life of local communities is renewed and enriched.

The Challenge

Why should we be involved in this attempt to renew civic life? Because we together with the church down the centuries have a call to work and pray for the welfare of the city. Our faith is not a private matter that concerns only ourselves - we are called to reflect a God whose rain falls on the just and the unjust and whose mercy is

boundless. And also because in our generation we must proclaim the love of God in every way that we can, and this is certainly one way of living out the truth of the gospel.

Our opportunities

In recent months, as we have made contact with local authorities across the Diocese, it has become clear that this is a time of significant change. More importantly it is a time of new opportunities for faith communities. If local government is to become more responsive then it needs partners who are willing to enter into dialogue and take their share of responsibility for the future good of our communities. We are in contact with a variety of organisations such as YMCA and Surestart to explore ways of responding to the needs of the most vulnerable. Alongside this we are working to provide parishes with the resources and expertise they need to ensure that we can meet the requirements of good practice in running our projects. We are confident that we can change with the times to find new ways of proclaiming God's unchanging love.

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Community Climate Action Conference

A FREE event for groups and individuals working to make their communities more sustainable.

**Saturday 15th November 2008, 10am-3.30pm
Chase Community Centre, Nottingham**

Topics include: getting started, renewable technologies, Transition Towns, peak oil, planning issues, communication and funding. Share stories, and learn from others and gain new inspiration!

**For bookings and more information: tel: 01623 580000 x7440
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